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16 January 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR: The President

SUBJECT : Bombing Casualties in North Vietnam

1. On 9 January I met with the CIA Subcommittee of the Senate to present one of our regular briefings on current matters of intelligence interest. As you know, Senator Russell invited Senators Mansfield, Fulbright, and Hickenlooper to attend this session.

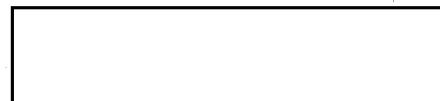
2. In my presentation, I did not discuss bombing in North Vietnam, but when this subject was raised in the questioning, I spoke from the paper attached as Tab A. This paper is a gist of the conclusions reached jointly by CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency in the latest of a series of monthly assessments of the bombing prepared for Secretary McNamara.

3. Further questions from the Senators attending led to the subject of civilian casualties from bombing in the North. To respond to these questions, we used



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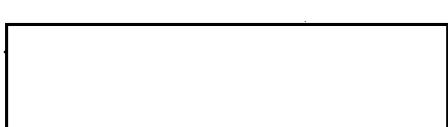
the findings of control studies produced by CIA at the request of Secretary McNamara. (A detailed account of these findings, the methodology used, and our reasons for thinking them valid is attached as Tab B).

4. In summary, we believe, and told the House Select Committee, that the bombing of North Vietnam had produced about 20,000 total casualties (killed and injured) from the beginning of the Rolling Thunder program in February 1965 through September 1966. About 11,000 were military and 10,000 were logistics workers and other civilians. A large proportion of these 10,000--we judge about two thirds--were males engaged in truck driving, bridge repair, and other war-related activities. The 10,000 figure adds up to about one war-worker or civilian killed or injured per US attack mission, a remarkably low figure. Of the 20,000 total casualties, we think about 45 percent were killed and 55 percent injured.

5. Our total figures for killed and injured are derived from exhaustive study of all the information which we can gather. [redacted]

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[redacted] who weight of US

ordnance expended against a given target is checked against photography. A casualty figure is then worked out on the basis of both damage assessment, known weapons effects data, and experience derived from the World War II "Strategic Bombing Survey." This figure

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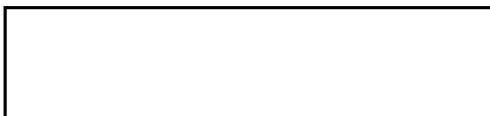
is then related to the

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a. We have considerable confidence that our totals are in the right ball-park, although obviously we cannot claim that they are accurate to the nearest thousand. To put them in perspective there are three factors which should be considered:

a. The figure of 18,000 killed and injured, most of whom were engaged in war-related activities such as transport of personnel and supplies into Laos and South Vietnam, is about one per attack mission (about 17,100 attack missions were flown through September 1968). This low ratio can

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achieved despite the dense population and the concentration of armed reconnaissance missions along heavily populated lines of communication.

b. The figure of 10,000 logistic workers and other civilians must also be compared with statistics on South Vietnamese civilians killed, wounded and kidnapped by Communist terrorism. US authorities in Saigon have reported a minimum of about 9,000 South Vietnamese killed and 41,000 kidnapped since 1967. This gives a rough total of 50,000 plus an unknown but obviously large number of wounded.

c. Much non-official commentary on the war has emphasized bombing damage to non-military objectives. There is, however, a body of evidence [redacted] summarized in Tab C, that our attacks in the North have been directed at military objectives and conducted with all the care that a pilot under

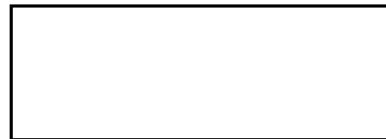
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intense antiaircraft fire could hope to exhibit.



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Richard Helms  
Director

Attachments: a/a

Concur:

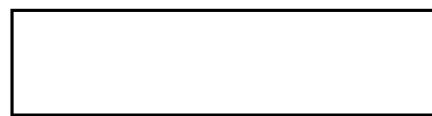
R. J. SMITH  
Deputy Director for Intelligence

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OCI [redacted] (13 Jan 67)

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